

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9797

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TAGS: MARR NATO

SUBJECT: US NOMINATION FOR POST OF GENERAL MANAGER OF
THE CENTRAL EUROPE OPERATING AGENCY (CEOA)

REFS: (A) STATE 43150, 172352Z FEB 78, (B) USNATO 965,
301454Z JAN 78

SUMMARY. IN A RESTRICTED SESSION OF THE CENTRAL EUROPE
PIPELINE POLICY COMMITTEE (CEPPC) ON 2 MAR 78, FOLLOWING
THE FIRST DAY OF ITS CURRENT MEETING, THE US REP (COL
FRANK) WAS CONFRONTED WITH THE ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE REACTI-
ON OF EUROPEAN MEMBERS TO THE NOMINATION OF JOHN NOLAN
FOR THE POST OF GENERAL MANAGER. THE OBJECTIONS WENT
PRINCIPALLY TO THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT SIGNED OUR IN-
TENTION TO BREACH THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" (AC/120-N/
319 OF 23 AUG 77) UNDER WHICH THE POST HAS BEEN ROTATED
AMONG THE BENELUX COUNTRIES. WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO DEFINE
THE STATUS OF OUR NOMINATION, SPECIFICALLY TO INDICATE IF
IT WERE "RESERVE" IN THE EVENT OF THE UNAVAILABILITY OF
A QUALIFIED BENELUX CANDIDATE. WE RECOMMEND A POSITION
BASED ON PARA 2 OF REF B. ACTION REQUESTED: GUIDANCE BY
COB 17 MAR 78. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE FIRST DAY OF THE CURRENT CEPPC MEETING,
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2 MARCH 78, THE CHAIRMAN CALLED FOR A RESTRICTED MEETING
AT THE END OF THE DAY TO DISCUSS THE US NOMINATION OF JOHN
NOLAN TO REPLACE THE BELGIAN INCUMBENT (GEN VERBOIS) AS
THE GENERAL MANAGER OF CEOA. IN THAT SESSION, THE US
WAS CRITICIZED ON TWO COUNTS: (A) WE APPEARED TO BE BREACH-
ING THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" UNDER WHICH, SINCE 1962,
THE POSITION OF GENERAL MANAGER HAS BEEN ROTATED AMONG

THE BENELUX COUNTRIES, AND (B) WE FAILED TO GIVE ADEQUATE NOTICE OF OUR INTENTION TO MAKE THIS MOVE AND THUS TO PERMIT OTHER NATIONS TO TAKE IT INTO ACCOUNT IN CONSIDERING NOMINATIONS OF THEIR CANDIDATES.

2. AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, THE BENELUX COUNTRIES STOOD STRICTLY BY THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT". THE FRG GAVE DIRECT SUPPORT TO THE BENELUX, PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE MADE A QUID PRO QUO ARRANGEMENT WITH THE DUTCH ON THE NAMSO GENERAL MANAGER POSITION. THE UK REP TOOK AN ALMOST EQUALLY STRONG LINE, BUT ON SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT GROUNDS. THEY WERE UPSET BECAUSE, THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" NOW BEING BREACHED, THEY FELT OBLIGED TO PUT UP THEIR OWN CANDIDATE AND IT WOULD TAKE THEM SOME TIME TO FIND ONE. CANADA WAS THE ONLY COUNTRY TO GIVE QUALIFIED SUPPORT TO THE UNITED STATES INITIATIVE IN THIS PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION.

3. THE DUTCH ARE GOING TO BE PARTICULARLY ADAMANT ON ADHERENCE TO THE STANDARD ARRANGEMENT BECAUSE IT IS THEIR TURN TO PLACE A CANDIDATE. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND, AS INDICATED ABOVE, THAT THEY HAVE AN ASSURANCE OF GERMAN SUPPORT IN RETURN FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE GERMAN CANDIDATE FOR THE NAMSO POSITION.

4. BY WAY OF AVOIDING A POSSIBLE IMPASSE, THE CHAIRMAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUGGESTED THAT THE US CANDIDATE MIGHT BE CONSIDERED AS "RESERVE", THAT IS TO SAY, AVAILABLE FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE ABSENCE OF A QUALIFIED BENELUX CANDIDATE. THIS MAY BE A WORKABLE APPROACH. AS WE POINTED OUT IN PARA 2 OF REF B, WE COULD INSIST ON OUR RIGHT TO PRESENT A CANDIDATE IN THE EXPECTATION THAT HIS QUALIFICATIONS WOULD BE GIVEN FAIR CONSIDERATION, BUT THAT WE BELIEVE ANY US CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE TO BE FAR SUPERIOR TO A BENELUX CANDIDATE TO HAVE A CHANCE. WE ALSO SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE NOMINATION OF A CANDIDATE OF NOLAN'S STATURE WOULD LIKELY FORCE THE NOMINATION OF A SUPERIOR DUTCH CANDIDATE. WE BELIEVE THAT A SUITABLE DEFINITION OF THE TERM "RESERVE" WOULD PERMIT US TO COOPERATE WITH THE MAJORITY IN PRESERVING THE IMAGE OF THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ACHIEVING THE US OBJECTIVE. WE HAVE IN MIND THE FOLLOWING COURSE OF ACTION:

A. THAT WE INDICATE TO THE CEPPC IN THE APRIL MEETING THAT WE COULD ACCEPT THE DESIGNATION OF NOLAN AS A "RESERVE" CANDIDATE PROVIDING IT WERE STRICTLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE BENELUX CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE TO BE CLEARLY EQUAL OR SUPERIOR IN STATURE AND QUALIFICATIONS AND THAT THERE

WOULD BE NO POLITICAL LOBBYING TO FORCE US ACCEPTANCE OF
A LESS CAPABLE CANDIDATE.

B. THAT WE INFORMALLY ADVISE THE UK THAT WE SEE NO
REASON TO BREACH THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" AS LONG AS
THE BENELUX COUNTRIES ARE WILLING AND ABLE TO PRODUCE
GENERAL MANAGERS OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY. WE WOULD SUGGEST
TO THE UK, THEREFORE, THAT IF THEY FELT COMPELLED TO
NOMINATE SOMEONE, HE ALSO BE DESIGNATED AS "RESERVE".

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C. THAT WE MAKE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE DUTCH AND THE
BELGIANS RE OUR POSITION (PARA A ABOVE).

5. ON 3 MARCH 78 THE BELGIAN DCM (BOUCKAERT) CALLED
CHARGE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE US ACTION. HE GENERALLY
ECHOED THE BENELUX POSITION STATED IN THE CEPPC
RESTRICTED SESSION, ADDING THAT IF WE PERSISTED IN A FULLY
COMPETITIVE NOMINATION, THE PROCESS OF REPLACING THE INCUM-
BENT WOULD HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH. CHARGE PROMISED
ONLY TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

6. WE ARE FULLY SENSITIVE TO THE PROBLEM IN THE CEOA
WHICH HAS BEEN CREATED IN RECENT YEARS BY THE INADEQUACIES
OF BENELUX GENERAL MANAGERS, IN PARTICULAR AND MOST
RECENTLY, GENERAL VERBOIS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS
IN ITSELF DICTATES OR JUSTIFIES A BREAKING OPEN OF THE
FIELD OF NOMINATIONS FOR THAT JOB, AND WE SEE NO REASON WHY
BENELUX COUNTRIES CANNOT PRODUCE SUPERIOR CANDIDATES ON
EVERY OCCASION. WE BELIEVE, FURTHERMORE, THAT THERE COULD
BE SOME UNDESIRABLE RESULTS IF THE FIELD WERE OPENED AND
WE WERE TO FACE THE SAME KIND OF WASTEFUL LOG-ROLLING

THAT WE NOW HAVE IN CONNECTION WITH OTHER NATO POSTS, CURRENTLY THE NAMSO GENERAL MANAGER. WE BELIEVE THAT THE PRESENCE OF A US CANDIDATE AS GOOD AS JOHN NOLAN WILL BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXTREMELY HEALTHY FOR THE SYSTEM, EITHER IF HE FORCES A QUANTUM IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF CEOA MANAGEMENT, OR IF HE HIMSELF BECOMES A PART OF THAT IMPROVEMENT. ACTION REQUESTED: AUTHORITY TO PROCEED WITH THE ACTIONS PROPOSED AT PARA 4.A, B, AND C ABOVE BY COB 17 MARCH 1978. BENNETT

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